

CLAIMS:

1. An apparatus for cleaning an animal's paw, the apparatus comprising:
  - an elongated, rigid, cylindrical sidewall;
  - 5 an end wall closing one end of the sidewall such as to allow the apparatus to contain a liquid; and
  - an open rim positioned on the end of the sidewall opposite to the end wall, wherein the rim is sized and configured to receive the paw and
  - 10 substantially seal to the paw so as to create a suction effect as the paw is withdrawn from the apparatus.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the apparatus further comprises  
15 a cleaning element positioned within the sidewall.
3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the cleaning element comprises a sponge operable to scour the paw.
- 20 4. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the cleaning element comprises a brush operable to scrub the paw.
5. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the cleaning element comprises a plurality of projections extending from an interior surface of the sidewall and  
25 operable to scrub the paw.
6. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the cleaning element is removable from the apparatus.
- 30 7. The apparatus of claim 1, the apparatus further including identifying markings on an exterior surface of the sidewall.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the apparatus further includes a gripping element positioned on the exterior surface to aid a user in gripping the apparatus.

5                    9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the rim is fluted such that the paw is guided into the apparatus by the shape of the rim.

10                   10. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the length of the sidewall is between two inches and fourteen inches and the internal diameter of the sidewall is between three-quarters of an inch and four inches.

15                   11. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the apparatus is substantially transparent to allow the paw to be viewed through the apparatus.

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12. An apparatus for cleaning an animal's paw, the apparatus comprising:

an elongated, rigid, cylindrical, sidewall having a length between two inches and fourteen inches and an internal diameter between three-quarters of an inch and four inches; and

an end wall closing one end of the sidewall such as to allow the apparatus to contain a liquid;

a fluted open rim positioned on the end of the sidewall opposite to the end wall, wherein the rim is shaped, sized and configured to receive the paw, guide the paw into the apparatus, and substantially seal to the paw so as to create a suction effect as the paw is withdrawn from the apparatus; and

a cleaning element positioned within the sidewall and operable to clean the animal's paw.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein an interior surface of the sidewall rubs the animal's paw to dislodge water, dirt, and debris from the paw.

14. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the cleaning element comprises a sponge operable to scour the animal's paw.

15. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the cleaning element comprises a brush operable to scrub the animal's paw.

16. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the cleaning element comprises a plurality of projections extending from an interior surface of the sidewall and operable to scrub the paw.

17. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the cleaning element is removable.

5 18. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein at least a portion of the apparatus is substantially transparent to allow the paw to be viewed through the apparatus.

19. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the apparatus further includes a gripping element positioned on the exterior surface to aid a user in  
10 gripping the apparatus.

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20. An apparatus for cleaning an animal's paw, the apparatus comprising:

an elongated, rigid, cylindrical sidewall constructed from a transparent material which is capable of retaining a liquid, wherein the sidewall has a length of approximately six inches, an internal diameter of approximately two inches, an external diameter of approximately two and one-fourth inches, and a thickness of approximately one-eighth of an inch;

an end wall closing one end of the sidewall such as to allow the apparatus to contain a liquid and having a substantially flat exterior portion to allow the apparatus to stand upright;

a fluted open rim positioned on an end of the sidewall opposite to the end wall wherein the rim is shaped, sized and configured to receive the paw, guide the paw into the apparatus, and substantially seal to the paw so as to create a suction effect as the paw is withdrawn from the apparatus;

an exterior surface of the sidewall including an identifying marking for readily identifying the apparatus and a gripping element to aid in gripping the apparatus; and

an interior surface of the sidewall operable for cleaning the paw through contact with the paw; and

a cleaning element positioned within the sidewall and operable to clean the paw including a sponge removably attached adjacent the end wall, having a diameter substantially equal to the internal diameter of the sidewall, a thickness of approximately one inch, and a cleaning surface operable for cleaning the paw through contact with the paw.

21. A method of cleaning an animal's paw, which comprises:

partially filling an apparatus having an elongated, rigid, cylindrical sidewall  
and a closed end wall with a liquid;

inserting the animal's paw through an open rim of the sidewall and into the  
apparatus so that the paw substantially seals to the rim;

agitating the paw within the apparatus so that the paw is cleaned by  
contacting the sidewall's interior surface and a cleaning element; and

withdrawing the paw from the apparatus, thereby creating a suction effect  
caused by the paw substantially sealing to the rim, wherein the

suction effect pulls water, dirt and debris away from the paw.